

In rebuke, US demands Israel explain terror listing for Palestinian NGOs

State Department says it was not informed of move ahead of time, appears to join others casting doubt on Jerusalem's stance that rights organizations served as fronts for terror

By **JACOB MAGID** 22 October 2021, 11:07 pm [Times of Israel \(TOI\) article](#)

The US will seek Israel's explanation as to why it decided to brand six Palestinian rights organizations as terror groups, a State Department spokesman said Friday, after others questioned Jerusalem's justification for the move in its immediate aftermath.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz announced earlier Friday that half a dozen civil society groups were being designated as terror organizations, saying that they had effectively operated as an arm for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine terror group. The move sparked a swift backlash around the globe, with the European Union, the Palestinian Authority, progressive Democrats, US Jewish groups, and international human rights organizations expressing criticism.

The US will "be engaging our Israeli partners for more information regarding the basis for these designations," Ned Price said during a telephone briefing with reporters.

"The Israeli government did not give us advance warning" that the Palestinian groups would be blacklisted, he added.

"We believe respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and a strong civil society are critically important to responsible and responsive governance," Price said.

The State Department spokesman also condemned Israel for its recently published plans to advance plans for thousands of settlement units to be built throughout the West Bank.

Earlier, the UN and European Union had separately raised doubts about Israel's reasoning for the black-listings.

"The designation decisions published by the National Bureau for Counter Terror Financing of Israel list extremely vague or irrelevant reasons, including entirely peaceful and legitimate activities such as provision of legal aid and "promotion of steps against Israel in the international arena," the UN Human Rights Office in Ramallah charged.

An EU statement noted that "Past allegations of the misuse of EU funds in relation to some of our Palestinian [civil society organization] partners have not been substantiated."

The six organizations named by Gantz's office are some of the most prominent rights groups in Palestinian civil society. Many have received considerable funding in grants from EU member states and the United Nations, among other donors.

They include the Palestinian rights organization Al-Haq, Addameer, which represents Palestinian security prisoners in Israeli military courts, Defense for Children-International, a group that advocates for Palestinian

children, along with the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, the Bisan Research and Advocacy Center and the Union Of Agricultural Work Committees.

Both Israeli military and civilian law ban supporting or joining a terror group, and violators can face years in prison. Israeli authorities can also seize assets belonging to terror organizations and forbid funding their activities; donors may also be subject to significant jail time.

Israeli authorities have charged before that the PFLP has pilfered millions of euros from civil society organizations affiliated with its members to fund terrorist activities. In May, the Shin Bet arrested four suspects, including a Spanish citizen, who were believed to have channeled European funds to the PFLP.